

# MOTIVATE MICHIGAN

"MAKING PRISON TIME  
PRODUCTIVE TIME"

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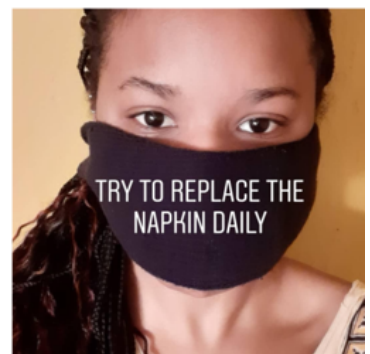
MAY/JUNE 2020 | MPRCA.INFO | ISSUE 6

After the statewide lockdown, due to budget constraints, rather than print newsletters for March and April we focused our mailing energy on our "Canvassing by Mail" efforts, mailing petition sheets to thousands of supporters across the state who signed the online petition at:

[www.sawarimi.org/mprca-petition](http://www.sawarimi.org/mprca-petition)

During those months an update was sent via jpay to inside coordinators. Moving forward we will continue to keep inside supporters informed about the Good Time Campaign to Repeal TIS through biweekly email updates and a printed newsletter every other month. You can request to be added to our mailing list by writing the return address, emailing your PIN to us support@mprca.info or by messaging us on facebook at:

[www.facebook.com/RepealTISMyth](https://www.facebook.com/RepealTISMyth)



PROTECTING PEOPLE IN PRISON FROM THE SPREAD

## CORONAVIRUS CARE PACK

CASH APP: \$FREEDOMNOWFUND

PAYPAL: SAWARIMEDIA@OUTLOOK.COM

**Mutual Aid providing people in prison with the items they need to keep themselves safe during the outbreak**

**Care Pack Items include:** Vicks Medicated chest rub (\$2.13), Alka seltzer plus cold relief (\$8.58 10 - 2 packs \$4.29 ea), Gen Chlorphen (allergy tab) \$1.75 2 bottles (88 cents ea), Cough drops \$2.96 - 3 bags (89 cents ea), Vitamin C (\$4.35 1 bottle)



"We understand that different facilities have different products in their store so if there are other related items you need that would provide relief from the coronavirus we trust you to use your discretion when making purchases with the mutual aid funds. The form can be found online at <https://forms.gle/vGKpDC9K1Wk8HqZ>

# MOVEMENT MOVES

PEOPLE | POSITIONS | POWER

## JLS NPS Calls Cover Corona



by Amani Sawari | April 6, 2020 | [www.sawarimi.org](http://www.sawarimi.org)

Before the conditions of the world crumbled; when people were allowed to gather, rally and protest; prisoners around the world shifted the mass consciousness away from any last remaining tendencies from the “tough-on-crime” era. A spotlight beamed into the darkest corners of society as people in prison in seventeen states refused to work in the positions assigned to them or eat the food served to them from August 21, 2018 through September 9th. Prisoners unified in order to amplify ten demands with the hopes of transformative change that would impact the criminal legal system, before it burst at the seams.

With with a national health crisis creeping into every corner of society, even the dark ones, the prison bubble is rapidly boiling over. Had we immediately applied those National Prison Strike demands when they were promoted in 2018, it's hard to imagine that we would be our current health crisis situation that places tens of thousands of incarcerated people's lives at risk.

The cramped, overcrowded conditions of a prison where people are housed on top of one another, cross contamination is prevalent and people are not given regular opportunities to clean themselves or their property is a breeding ground for illness and disease. As the spokesperson for the National Prison Strike, I can't help but wonder if now Corona is what it takes for people to listen.

### Bringing the Person into Focus, by Eliminating State Profit on Labor

We begin with a call for Immediate improvements to the conditions of prisons and prison policies that recognize the humanity of imprisoned men and women. With policies allowing for humans to be warehoused, packed less a few three feet apart in a gym or lobby to accommodate extra bodies, the pandemic amplifies the need for this demand to be addressed. Over the past few weeks organizers have called for Corrections departments to reduce the amount of people confined to their 'care' and give

prisoners free access to cleaning products, soaps, preventative supplies, hand sanitizer and other items that would provide relief while decreasing the potential for a nasty spread.

Rather than being provided with these products, people in prison have been staffed to fill in the gaps of labor created by the social distancing orders on the outside. In several states prison labor has been used to craft masks (South Carolina & Texas), bottle hand sanitizer (New York) and sew hospital gowns (Washington). Prisoners, unable to practice social distancing, are working for free (and for pennies an hour like in GA) which is why prisoners called for an immediate end to prison slavery. All persons imprisoned in any place of detention under United States jurisdiction must be paid the prevailing wage in their state or territory for their labor. In order to combat this legislation has been introduced in multiple states to raise the wage of people working in prison to be equal to minimum wages for people on the outside. Without these types of laws in place we will continue to see corrections demonstrate profits over people, instead of valuing people over potential profits.

### Making Rehabilitation Essential in Corrections by Eliminating Overcrowding

As a result of the Coronavirus crisis every prison has responded by stopping the flow of “nonessential” personnel this includes ending visitation stopping people from seeing their loved ones, ending programming by restricting outside volunteers from coming in and most devastatingly, suspending staff positions that are labeled “nonessential”. During the crisis the Ombudsman, a non biased office that addresses prisoners concerns of abuse, has not been qualified as essential staff and as a result is not admitted to enter the prison facility during the crisis. In times of crisis correction's grips onto punitive methods, further punishing people in situations for which they have no control. This normalized path of abuse and silencing of people's voices while in prison is why the Prison Litigation Reform Act must be rescinded, allowing imprisoned humans a proper channel to address grievances and violations of their rights. This further exasperates the problem that people in prison face when attempting to have their concerns addressed.

Our corrections department functions as if there is no room for growth or development, when these should be the focus of the department's mission. This problem is incited by policies like Truth in Sentencing (TIS) laws and the Sentencing Reform Act that mandate minimums and contribute to massive overcrowding nationwide. The Truth in Sentencing Act and the Sentencing Reform Act must be rescinded so that imprisoned humans have a possibility of rehabilitation and parole. No human shall be sentenced to Death by Incarceration or serve any sentence without the possibility of parole. The prevalence of death by incarceration is an indication of massive failure within our “corrections” department. In the few states where TIS laws are still active, like Michigan, it is the main cause for overcrowding. TIS laws to not account for the individual process of rehabilitation that each person goes through.

According to a February 2020 report by the Sentencing Project, the number of people serving life sentences in the United States exceeds the entire prison population of 1970! An immediate end to the racial overcharging, over-sentencing, and parole denials of Black and brown humans

# It's the Final Canvassing Countdown

\*Consolidated from April and May Digital Update Memos

We are in the final days of our canvassing period for the Michigan Prisoner Rehabilitation Credit Act and I want to encourage you all that even though we are more than 150,000 signatures short as the deadline passes, not to lose faith or momentum. On May 4, 2020 MPRCA submitted a lawsuit against Gov. Whitmer, Jocelyn Benson, Secretary of State of Michigan, and Jonathan Brater, Director of the Michigan Bureau of Elections due to their refusal to provide a remedy to initiative's canvassing prior to the statewide lockdown. I'm excited to share that we have been assigned a case number, 4:20-cv-11246. We hope that our judges will recognize how hard we've worked and how much we have been able to accomplish even in the midst of this unprecedented crises. We also hope that they will understand the desperate need for TIS to be repealed in MDOC and we hope that officials will remedy this situation by having the question of repealing TIS laws to the November ballot. We are currently searching for an attorney to represent us on this case knowing that we cannot allow the coronavirus to eliminate the people's voice from our 2020 election!

As we await a decision from our District County Judges we will continue to collect signatures even once our May deadline passes because there is a high possibility that the deadline will be extended so we must be proactive and continue to expand our support base. If you haven't already and would like to assist in this effort please send addresses where we can send the official copy of the petition sheet to in the mail. You can send them via jpay or by mail. Also, if your family hasn't mailed their petition back yet, DON'T WORRY. We are instructing canvassers to scan or take a picture of their completed sheet and email it to our campaign at support@mprca.info. If people in your network still don't have a sheet, it can be download online on our website at [www.mprca.info](http://www.mprca.info) Please instruct supporters to get their hands on a sheet and to keep collecting, keep supporting, keep signing and keep spreading the word about MPRCA throughout the month of June.

In order to bring any resolution to the state of Michigan's prisons we are going to need to host a combined and collaborative effort that applies pressure to specific decision makers. On April 6, 2020 MPRCA along with a group of organizational stakeholders released a letter (included below) with demands that call for rapid release of as many people as possible from Michigan's prisons to deter the negative impacts of the public health crisis caused by the COVID 19 pandemic. After a week with no response from the Governor's office we came together to organize a twitter storm using #LetMiPeopleGo targeting Governor Whitmer, Dir. Heidi Washington, Lt. Gov. Gilchrist, public information officer Chris Gautz, chairperson for the parole board Michael Eagen and other decision makers in Michigan's Department of Corrections. During our first action, on Tuesday April 14th we made it to #1 Trending with over 5,000 participants. We did another twitter storm on April 28th and made it to #3 in over a two hour time period. Moving forward we will be tweeting #LetMiPeople go every Tuesday from 1-3 p EST requesting that Gov. Whitmer use her executive authority to suspend TIS laws, release vulnerable people and low risk populations. We urge you to encourage your family members to participate every week, especially now with the pandemic highlighting a need for desperate change. Remember, this isn't over until TIS is finally repealed and as the campaign shifts we need your continued support, please share these updates with others. —

## RE: PLEASE ACT NOW!

Letter regarding executive order on prisons from advocacy organizations: AFSC-MI, Citizens for Prison Reform, Detroit Justice Center, Family Advisory Board, Humanity for Prisoners, MI-CURE, Michigan Liberation, Michigan Prisoner Rehabilitation Credit Act, Michigan Protection and Advocacy Service, Inc., National Association of Social Workers-Michigan, Nation Outside

April 6, 2020

Dear Governor Whitmer and Director Washington,

We understand you all are overwhelmed with a historical pandemic and doing your best to negotiate this turbulent time. We also understand you are inundated with recommendations from various stakeholders and powerholders. We represent organizations directly connected to people in

prison in Michigan. Many of us have been incarcerated in Michigan's prisons or love people living in Michigan's prisons. We want our voices to be heard and we would like to consult with as you make decisions regarding the treatment of people in the prison system. There is no doubt in our minds that the best way to manage the Covid-19 challenge in Michigan's prison system is to release as many people as possible as quickly as possible. We believe that can be done without compromising public safety, and in the best interest of public health, but it will require the system to consider different rules. We have also listed out recommendations for addressing conditions for those people who are left behind. The following recommendations apply to individuals who score high or average probability on the Parole Guideline Score Sheet and have a home placement available to them: Release individuals who are past their ERD. This would include individuals who have not been able to complete recommended programming. Waive all requirements for programming and psychological evaluations. Release individuals who are serving time for a technical rule violation. Suspend truth in sentencing. Michigan is an outlier in requiring individuals to serve the entire minimum sentence before being considered for parole. Consider releasing individuals who have served half the minimum sentence. Restore good time & disciplinary credits and earned credits to individuals who have demonstrated years of good behavior. Apply good time & disciplinary credits and earned credits to those serving habitual sentences. Release individuals who are infirm, elderly, and medically frail. Release people who are receiving care for cancer and other chronic conditions that require frequent off-site care to their loved ones, immediately. Create substantive plans for continuing medical care post-incarceration for any person who is currently being treated for a serious medical condition and is released to address COVID 19 concerns. Initiate electronic public hearings for all people who are awaiting them and/or who were about to be scheduled for them. Treat individuals who are serving long indeterminate sentences as if they were paroleable lifers and consider them for parole on the same schedule as lifers. Begin a robust effort to process and expedite commutations. Increase the size of the parole board to facilitate faster processing. Use electronic public hearings to expedite commutations. Re-entry monies must be targeted for people released from prison. This includes providing cash assistance relief for people coming home by using both stimulus money and pooling emergency grants from philanthropic institutions. This also includes providing access to providers who can offer recovery assistance for people who use drugs and medication assisted treatment and overdose support.

The following are recommendations for those left behind in the prison setting during the pandemic and, also, for after the pandemic: Protect people who are ill with COVID-19 and/or exposed. Make sure no one is alone while they are living with COVID-19, or while they are under quarantine for close contact observation. Provide care in the form of frequent access to water, warming foods, pain relievers, and fever reducers. Provide out of cell time for all people with COVID-19 and people under quarantine for close contact and/or full units under quarantine—fresh air is critical. Provide minimal property like sweatshirts, slippers, tablets, books, writing materials, etc. Keep families informed of what is going on with isolated people. Continue to provide masks, soap, and disinfectants that combat the virus. Provide free phone calls for people in prison and their communities. The state should cover the costs associated with the GTL contract. The state should immediately end the special equipment fund and bring calls down to 3.4 cents per minute. The state should then cover this GTL rate. Stop up charging people for store items. Eliminate the 38% surcharge that goes to the state for store items. Provide indigent people in prison with money to purchase store items. Provide care for people who are not COVID positive who have chronic health conditions. Create separate field medical centers in each prison to care for people who need ongoing care and are not COVID positive. Suspend shake downs and pat downs as these contribute to increased cross contamination. Suspend the issuing of all misconducts unless violent. For questions or concerns, please contact Natalie Holbrook [nholbrook@afsc.org](mailto:nholbrook@afsc.org)

We look forward to your response and to your prompt action on the aforementioned.

Sincerely,

American Friends Service Committee's Michigan Criminal Justice Program  
Citizens for Prison Reform, Detroit Justice Center, Family Advisory Board  
Humanity for Prisoners, MI-CURE, Michigan Liberation, Michigan Prisoner Rehabilitation Credit Act, Michigan Protection and Advocacy Service, Inc.  
National Association of Social Workers-Michigan, and Nation Outside



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# STIMULUS CHECK WEBSERIES

Catered towards supporting families impacted by mass incarceration

## JUNE 4, 5:00 WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

U.S. citizens or resident aliens who:  
 received W-2 in 2018 or 2019 return  
 Have a valid Social Security number.  
 Could not file federal tax as a dependent of another taxpayer.  
 Had adjusted gross income under certain limits (\$12,200 for individual  
 or \$24,400 for married couples filing joint)

## JUNE 11, 5:00 FILL OUT THE NON-FILERS' FORM

**SUBMIT A NON-FILERS FORM AT [BIT.LY/FREETSTIMULUS](https://bit.ly/freetstimulus)**

Full name  
 Address (your tax facility where you are incarcerated)  
 Email address (provide your own or one another that you have access to)  
 Date of birth  
 Social Security number  
 Drivers license number (optional)  
 Bank account and routing number (optional, check alternatives below)

1. Set up a prepaid debit card like Reloadly by American Express or Blues Virtual Prepaid Visa Card. These cards will give you an account and routing number to use with the IRS when you fill out your form. Here is where you can deposit your stimulus and other checks.
2. Use a mobile payment service like CashApp or China where you'll receive a routing and account number that you can include on your form for direct deposit.
3. Have the money deposited to the bank account of a person or organization that you trust to forward the payment to you.
4. Have a check mailed to your home mailing address and endorsed to someone you trust who can deposit the funds into your bank account.

## JUNE 18, 5:00 BANK ACCOUNT ALTERNATIVES

1. Set up a prepaid debit card like Reloadly by American Express or Blues Virtual Prepaid Visa Card. These cards will give you an account and routing number to use with the IRS when you fill out your form. Here is where you can deposit your stimulus and other checks.

2. Use a mobile payment service like CashApp or China where you'll receive a routing and account number that you can include on your form for direct deposit.

3. Have the money deposited to the bank account of a person or organization that you trust to forward the payment to you.

4. Have a check mailed to your home mailing address and endorsed to someone you trust who can deposit the funds into your bank account.

## JUNE 25, 5:00 ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

**DEADLINES TO SUBMIT**

Due to the Coronavirus crisis the filing deadline for 2020 has been pushed back from April 15th to **July 15, 2020**

Mailed sure to complete the form prior to the deadline in order to have your form reviewed for a stimulus check. After submitting the form, the IRS will take up to 48 hours to respond with a rejection or approval of the submission. Expectations can be unrealistic with regard to additional information needed for approval.

## JULY 2, 5:00 CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

**VOTE BY MAIL IN JAIL**

You will be having online information sessions every week beginning in May through the July deadline to help non-filers and prisoners with submitting the simple 1040 form using the methods listed above. We will also cover voting by mail, absentee ballot while incarcerated. We will go over some of the most procedural differences in each state and make sure that if you are eligible that you know how to best receive the ballot even if you are unable to go to the polls in November.

## JULY 9, 5:00 NEED HELP? QNA

**CALL IN DETAILS**

Topic: Stimulus Checks for Incarcerated People  
 Time: Every Thursday at 5:00pm  
 From May 28, 2020 until July 1, 2020. 7:00pm-8:00pm  
[Join Online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8d88080217](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8d88080217)  
 Meeting ID: 844 307 8237  
 Find your local number  
<https://us02nc.zoom.us/j/8d88080217>

**Call by your closest location**

- Atlanta: 404-499-1418 (Toll-free)
- Chicago: 773-444-4444 (Toll-free)
- Denver: 303-444-4444 (Toll-free)
- Los Angeles: 213-444-4444 (Toll-free)
- Manhattan: 212-444-4444 (Toll-free)
- Miami: 305-444-4444 (Toll-free)
- New York: 212-444-4444 (Toll-free)
- Phoenix: 602-444-4444 (Toll-free)
- Portland: 503-444-4444 (Toll-free)
- San Francisco: 415-444-4444 (Toll-free)
- Seattle: 206-444-4444 (Toll-free)
- Wash. DC: 202-444-4444 (Toll-free)